

himself received the 1997 Golden Bear Award for Management from the State of California, and the National Tiffany Award, the highest granted to Red Cross paid staff.

Mr. Wussler and the chapter's board of directors in 1994 created the National Nurse Assistant Training program, which is gratefully supported by local hospitals and trains and certifies 200 students a year as nursing assistants. The chapter has also implemented a home health care training program and an acute care program to help nurse assistants further their career.

Most important to the citizens of San Bernardino County, the Red Cross has been a lifeline for thousands of people who have lost their homes or seen their lives thrown into turmoil by disasters like the Big Bear and Landers Earthquakes of 1993 and the terrible floods that wiped out communities from Forest Glen to Mentone in 1999. The chapter has also helped in countless small disasters that have thrown individual families from their homes, and helped in planning for the disasters we will face in the future.

Mr. Speaker, after 19 years with the San Bernardino Chapter, Robert Wussler has decided to retire. I ask you and my colleagues to please join me in thanking him for a career dedicated to public service and aiding the afflicted, and wish him well in his future endeavors.

MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE
ABDULLAH

HON. ROBERT WEXLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, this week I will travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to meet with Crown Prince Abdullah and other Saudi officials for the third time since the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11. As a result of my previous visits, I have become convinced that it is in the best interest of the United States to remain actively engaged in a constructive dialogue and working partnership with Saudi officials and their leader Crown Prince Abdullah.

My initial reaction to traveling thousands of miles to the Saudi Kingdom, in early October 2001, where 15 out of 19 hijackers as well as Osama bin Laden hailed from, was negative. I saw little value in traveling to a region where even in the wake of over 3,000 American deaths, there remained an undeniable hatred of America, continued financial support for fervent extremism, and ties to terrorist organizations that threaten our nation's interest and security. However, I have changed my initial reluctance to engage Saudi Arabia, though not my objection to many of its policies, because Saudi Arabia lies not only at the heart of the problem facing the United States in the Middle East and the Islamic world, but they are also our best hope for resolving these same problems.

My meetings with Crown Prince Abdullah in Riyadh and Jeddah have been candid and frank discussions regarding many aspects of U.S.-Saudi bilateral relations. No subject has been taboo. The Crown Prince and I both voiced criticism of each others country's policies, but we also reiterated the longstanding

friendship and alliance between America and Saudi Arabia and our many common interests and goals.

The Crown Prince impresses me as a man with a vision of peace and coexistence between Israelis and Arabs; moreover, he is willing to risk his personal prestige for a quest for peace. The Crown Prince is a practical and logical man. He is tested and knows the value of leadership. I am convinced that the Crown Prince senses an historic opportunity to build confidence and seek peace from the extraordinary tragedies of the last 20 months and appreciates this opportunity to lead the Arab world away from extreme radicalism and toward normalizing relations with Israel.

My optimism is checked, however, by a recurrent fundamental failure by Saudi Arabia to appreciate the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from an Israeli perspective and to recognize the sense of vulnerability of the Israeli people. In fact, the Crown Prince often suggests that American policy in the Middle East is unbalanced and too favorable to Israel. Ironically, it is the Saudi policy toward Israel that too often lacks objectivity.

Since September 11, there has been much criticism of the Saudi government in our country and internationally. Much of the criticism is justified, and I have joined my colleagues in Congress in voicing my concerns and objections when I deemed it necessary and in the best interest of the nation. I have been a vocal critic of harmful policies carried out by the Saudi government or Saudi nationals, including their lack of democracy, freedom of the press and abominable treatment of women. I have also strongly condemned Saudi connections to the financing and support of international terrorist organizations, unwillingness to unequivocally condemn suicide bombings perpetrated by Palestinian terrorists, financial payoffs to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, and their financial backing of extremist schools in Pakistan and around the world that preach intolerance and hate. Like many Americans, I am also angered and disturbed by the virulent anti-American and anti-Semitic rhetoric that is published in the government-run press and echoed repeatedly by Saudis throughout the kingdom. The Saudi government cannot have it both ways; if they are truly committed to peaceful coexistence with Israel, they cannot feed the fires of those who hate and are bent on the destruction of the peace process and the State of Israel itself.

Faced with growing American and international criticism, Crown Prince Abdullah has reevaluated the effect of Saudi policies and is seeking to make fundamental changes in the Saudi Kingdom. Since assuming leadership in 1995, Crown Prince Abdullah has taken initial steps to reform Saudi Arabia's economic and political structure and is making serious attempts to root out corruption. The Crown Prince is also the leading advocate for Saudi Arabia's obtaining membership in the World Trade Organization, WTO. I strongly support this effort and believe that WTO membership would lead to greater accountability and transparency in the Saudi Kingdom and, more importantly, would connect Saudis to the global economy.

Most important of all, Crown Prince Abdullah brought Saudi Arabia into the international spotlight last February by initiating a proposal that offers Arab normalization of rela-

tions with the State of Israel, if Israel returns to the pre-1967 borders. While the Saudi plan maybe viewed by some as a non-starter, an initial position for negotiations, or even worse a public relations ploy, it should not be altogether ignored or minimized. This initiative is a significant signal that Crown Prince Abdullah will be an active participant in the elusive peace process and may be the most progressive step toward Arab-Israeli reconciliation taken by any Arab leader since Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat traveled to Jerusalem and King Hussein of Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Unfortunately, during Camp David II in 2000, too many Arab leaders remained on the sidelines while a comprehensive peace proposal was being circulated. Crown Prince Abdullah seems to recognize the lost opportunity that occurred during Camp David II, and in a promising sign he clearly stated to me his intention to be actively involved in any new effort for a comprehensive peace agreement.

The United States would be ill-advised to disengage from Saudi Arabia or its leader. As the heart and soul of the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia is home to Islam's two holiest places, Mecca and Medina. It is the Muslim world and, in particular, Arab states that the United States must actively engage in dialogue to promote educational reform, greater religious freedom, democracy, freedom of the press and expanded rights for women. We need to press the Saudi government, especially Crown Prince Abdullah who has significant weight in the Arab and Islamic world, to address religious freedom and human rights. At the same time, we must seek the advice and assistance of prominent Saudis to help America strengthen and improve our standing in the Muslim world. It would be short-sighted to ignore the perceptions and beliefs of more than one billion people.

Saudi Arabia is also integral to our policy of containing and eventually removing Saddam Hussein from power. Saudi cooperation with the U.S. and other allies in enforcing Operation Southern Watch over Southern Iraq has been considerable. During my visit to Saudi Arabia this week, I will reiterate that Iraq repeatedly fails to comply with United Nations (UN) resolutions, continues to block unfettered UN weapons inspections, is stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, harbors and supports terrorists, and poses a grave threat to the security of the United States and every nation in the region. It is critical to the United States that Crown Prince Abdullah and Saudi Arabia assist the Bush Administration in building a coalition of support to remove the threat of Saddam Hussein to the region.

My visit to Saudi Arabia is also another opportunity to send a message from the American people to the Saudi government and its citizens that the United States intends on continuing our engagement and partnership with their country; however, I would be remiss if I ignored the continued presence and activity of dangerous extremists in the Saudi Kingdom and the danger they pose to America and our allies. Ultimately, the future of U.S.-Saudi relations hinge on the efforts of Saudi leaders to root out extremist elements within the kingdom and choke off all financial support emanating from the kingdom to terrorist organizations around the world.

As for Saudi Arabia's leading role in the Middle East, it is incumbent on Crown Prince

Abdullah and other Arab leaders to help reform the Palestinian leadership, as outlined by President Bush on June 24, 2002, from one based on corruption, incitement, terror and suicide bombings to one based on democracy, peace and constructive dialogue. This will be the major thrust of my conversations with the Crown Prince this Sunday in Jeddah. It is important to note that Crown Prince Abdullah and other Saudi officials have already played a constructive role in the reform effort by assisting the Palestinians in writing a new constitution. Without concerted international pressure, there will be no genuine reform of the Palestinian leadership and, I fear, no end to suicide bombings. These terrorist acts must end if we are to reach a comprehensive and lasting regional peace based on security, recognition for Israel, and statehood for the Palestinians. Indeed, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to have a nation of their own will be destroyed unless there is a change of attitude among those in the Arab and Muslim worlds who encourage and provide moral, financial and material support to so-called martyrs who commit these heinous, inhuman and immoral terrorist acts.

As a strong supporter of an unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel, I care deeply about the future security and prosperity of the Jewish homeland. In meetings with Saudi leaders, I will remind them of the unprecedented terrorism the Israeli people have faced over the past 20 months and the tragic toll that suicide bombers have inflicted on innocent Israelis. It is also imperative they understand that like America, Israel has the right to defend herself against these barbaric attacks and that the United States will stand in solidarity with Israel during this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to avert another tragedy like September 11 and defeat the scourge of terrorism, America needs allies—we cannot do it alone. I am going to Saudi Arabia because more effective cooperation and understanding between our two countries is fundamental to winning the international war on terrorism, and members of Congress must play more than just a consenting role in that effort.

PUBLIC SAFETY TAX CUT ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. This legislation will achieve two important public policy goals.

First, it will effectively overturn a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service which has declared as taxable income the waiving of fees by local governments who provide service for public safety volunteers.

Many local governments use volunteer firefighters and auxiliary police either in place of, or as a supplement to, their public safety professionals. Often as an incentive to would-be volunteers, the local entities might waive all or a portion of the fees typically charged for city services such as the provision of drinking water, sewerage charges, or debris pick up. Local entities make these decisions for the purpose of encouraging folks to volunteer, and seldom do these benefits come anywhere

near the level of a true compensation for the many hours of training and service required of the volunteers. This, of course, not even to mention the fact that these volunteers could very possibly be called into a situation where they may have to put their lives on the line.

Rather than encouraging this type of volunteerism, which is so crucial, particularly to America's rural communities, the IRS has decided that the provision of the benefits described above amount to taxable income. Not only does this adversely affect the financial position of the volunteer by foisting new taxes about him or her, it has in fact led local entities to stop providing these benefits, thus taking away a key tool they have used to recruit volunteers. That is why the IRS ruling in this instance has a substantial deleterious impact on the spirit of American volunteerism. How far could this go? For example, would consistent application mean that a local Salvation Army volunteer be taxed for the value of a complimentary ticket to that organization's annual county dinner? This is obviously bad policy.

This legislation would rectify this situation by specifically exempting these types of benefits from federal taxation.

Next, this legislation would also provide paid professional police and fire officers with a \$1,000 per year tax credit. These professional public safety officers put their lives on the line each and every day, and I think we all agree that there is no way to properly compensate them for the fabulous services they provide. In America we have a tradition of local law enforcement and public safety provision. So, while it is not the role of our federal government to increase the salaries of these, it certainly is within our authority to increase their take-home pay by reducing the amount of money that we take from their pockets via federal taxation, and that is something this bill specifically does as well.

President George Bush has called on Americans to volunteer their time and energy to enhancing public safety. Shouldn't Congress do its part by reducing taxes that discourage public safety volunteerism? Shouldn't Congress also show its appreciation to police officers and fire fighters by reducing their taxes? I believe the answer to both of these questions is a resounding "Yes" and therefore I am proud to introduce the Public Safety Tax Cut Act. I request that my fellow Members join in support of this key legislation.

IN HONOR OF HEROES WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, as we approach Independence Day, I submit for the RECORD a speech given in my Congressional District on Memorial Day, by James E. Merna of 7503 Dover Lane, Lanham, Maryland, honoring the heroism of veterans from Prince George's County, Maryland, that have fought to protect our freedoms.

HONORING FIVE SONS OF PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, MARYLAND, THAT HAVE FOUGHT TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOMS

(By James E. Merna, Former Maryland State Commandant, Marine Corps League)

Thank you Mayor Harrington, Councilwoman Marion Hoffman, Bill Hickey, other Town of Bladensburg elected and appointed officials, members of American Legion Post 131, leaders of other veterans organizations, and fellow veterans. Thank you for inviting me. I am pleased to be here.

The town and citizens of Bladensburg should take great pride for the many years you have conducted ceremonies such as this. Bladensburg is not only a historic town—a famous port town—it is also a very patriotic town. Thanks also to Colmar Manor American Legion Post 131 for helping to make these events happen.

Memorial Day, as it is now observed, is a special day set aside to remember the service and sacrifice made by Americans who answered their country's call to duty in all wars—those who gave their lives, those who served and returned, those who were injured or disabled as a result of their service those who remain missing in action, and those who serve today in Afghanistan and around the world to defend freedom and to fight terrorism.

In my remarks today, I want to talk about five brave Sons of Prince George's County, who answered their nation's call, and of their courage, devotion to duty, and personal sacrifice. I believe it is a message for all, but especially for our young people. Better role model other than their parents or close relatives, they could not have.

I stress younger people in light of an announcement from the U.S. Department of Education this month that said "More than half of America's high school seniors do not have even the most basic grasp of U.S. history, showing no improvement in a nationwide test since 1994."

The Education Department issued a national history "report card" which measured the performance last year of fourth, eighth and 12th graders in history. Students did not know, for instance, that America's fundamental belief in individual liberty was expressed in the Declaration of Independence, or that the image of UNCLE SAM was used to appeal to patriotism during wartime.

Educators said the results were "truly abysmal," pointing out that the higher the grade and closer a student was to voting age, the lower the understanding of U.S. history.

In grade 12, only 43 percent of students had a basic or proficient knowledge of history. More than a third of fourth graders and nearly 40 percent of eighth graders also did not have a basic understanding of the subject. The Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, stressed that "basic" is the bottom of the achievement ladder. And, he said, they didn't even reach that—"the lowest rung."

In this complex day and age, this is troublesome. History is a key component of our nation's school curriculum, and it is through history that we understand our past and contemplate our future. Especially following the September 11 attacks that targeted U.S. democracy. It is appalling that some of the questions that stumped students involved the most fundamental concepts of America's democracy. Our work is cut out for us—we need more enlightened students—and better trained history teachers.

The first notable Son of Prince George's County that I want to mention, is one of your very own, a life-long resident of Bladensburg. When I think of him, I'm reminded of the many great songs that were popular during World War II. And I'm referring to records, not CD's, tapes, or DVD's.